



# MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

THE **OUTSIDE** IS IN US ALL.

**Meeting Date:** December 10, 2020

**Agenda Item:** Adjusted 2020 white-tailed deer seasons in all or portions of HDs 320, 322, 324, 325, 326, 329, 330, 331, and 340

**Action Needed:** Final

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 20 minutes

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**Background:** Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) continues to create challenges for deer and elk management in Montana. In 2019, CWD was detected among white-tailed deer in the Ruby Valley. These deer are contiguous with white-tailed deer and moose throughout the Ruby, Jefferson, Beaverhead, and Big Hole valleys. They are seasonally connected to populations of elk, moose, and mule deer. As of November 20, 2020, surveillance of hunter-harvested white-tailed deer suggests prevalence of: 8.3% ( $n = 30$ ) in HD 320; 21.8% ( $n = 226$ ) in HD 322, 0% in HDs 324 ( $n = 2$ ) and 325 ( $n = 19$ ); and 40% ( $n = 5$ ) in HD 326. Surveillance suggests CWD prevalence may be as high as 50 percent in a localized portion of HD 322 where about 2,000 white-tailed deer are routinely counted in spring.

The department proposes a CWD management hunt from December 15, 2020, through February 15, 2021, across the following deer-elk hunting districts and hunting district portions:

- HD 320—Those portions within the Jefferson River Watershed. Those portions within the Madison River watershed would be excluded;
- HD 322—All;
- HD 324—All;
- HD 325—Those portions within the Blacktail Deer Creek Watershed and north of Clark Canyon Creek. Those portions within the Beaverhead River Watershed south of Clark Canyon Creek would be excluded;
- HD 326—All;
- HD 329—All;
- HD 330—Those portions within the Ruby River Watershed. Those portions within the Madison River Watershed would be excluded;
- HD 331—All; and
- HD 340—All.

The department proposes existing unused 2020 general deer licenses to remain valid for either-sex white-tailed deer harvest and unused 2020 003-00, 331-01, and 399-00 B-licenses to remain valid for antlerless white-tailed deer harvest. No additional licenses will be sold after the general hunting season except the 003-00, which will be sold until January 15, 2021. Based on recent years' sales of 003-00 and 399-00 licenses and subsequent harvest, an estimated 10,000–12,000 white-tailed B-licenses will be held by hunters and remain valid during the CWD management hunt.

**Public Involvement Process and Results:** Public comment will be accepted during the December 2020 commission meeting. The Region has reached out to a limited number of organizations and landowners.

**Alternatives and Analysis:** Proposals may be adopted as proposed, with adjustment, with additions, with deletions, or no change.

**Proposed Motion:** I move the commission vote to adopt as final the adjusted 2020 white-tailed deer seasons in all or portions of HDs 320, 322, 324, 325, 326, 329, 330, 331, and 340 as presented.